

**Abstract 428**

**TITLE:** From Leather Men to Street Hustlers: Involving Community Members in the Design and Implementation of HIV Prevention Programs

**AUTHORS:** Gibson, S; Herman, J; Miranda, M (STOP AIDS Project, San Francisco, CA)

**ISSUE:** Recent studies indicate that rates of consistent condom use among MSM populations in San Francisco are decreasing (MMWR/January 29, 1999/Vol. 48/No. 3/Pg. 45). New treatments for HIV and a decreasing sense of urgency toward the AIDS epidemic challenge HIV prevention agencies to develop intervention strategies which resonate with at-risk populations. In order for HIV prevention programs to maintain their relevancy for the populations they serve, community members must be involved in the identification of their HIV prevention concerns as well as in the development and implementation of the corresponding intervention strategies.

**SETTING:** Community-based HIV prevention programs with gay and bisexual men in San Francisco.

**PROJECT:** In 1998, the STOP AIDS Project in San Francisco initiated two programs involving gay and bisexual men in different geographic areas of the city—the Polk and South of Market (SoMa) neighborhoods. Staff interviewed key opinion leaders in these respective neighborhoods in order to identify HIV prevention concerns among these different populations of gay and bisexual men. Staff involved community members in the identification of prominent areas of concern as well as in the design and implementation of the corresponding HIV prevention strategies. In the SoMa neighborhood, members of the leather community identified “bareback” sex as one of the most immediate HIV prevention concerns. In the Polk neighborhood, young male sex workers identified survival sex and substance use as HIV prevention concerns.

**RESULTS:** The corresponding interventions from the projects described above successfully involved members of very different populations of gay and bisexual men in the design and implementation of community-based HIV prevention strategies. Members of the leather community participated in the development of a community forum on bareback sex as well as a series of nine workshops specific for leather men. In addition, they produced, funded, and helped distribute 7,000 copies of a manual on HIV prevention concerns for their community. To build relationships and establish trust with the young male sex workers in the Polk, disposable cameras were distributed to these “working boys.” The resulting photographic images have been displayed with more than 400 attendees in the first month.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** The neighborhood organizing program at STOP AIDS has succeeded at identifying and involving a variety of gay and bisexual men in the implementation of HIV prevention programs at a time when many MSM no longer perceive HIV transmission to be a severe public health threat. As gay and bisexual men’s relationships to the AIDS epidemic evolve over time, HIV prevention programs need to adapt and respond as well. The Neighborhood Organizing program has built into the agency structure a system which directly involves community members in identifying and responding to HIV prevention concerns. As shifts in the epidemic continue to develop, this type of community-based organizing will help ensure that HIV prevention programs maintain their relevancy to the populations they serve.

**PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Name:** Jed Herman and Marcel Miranda

**Address:** STOP AIDS Project  
2128 Fifteenth Street  
San Francisco, CA 94114

**Telephone:** (415) 575-0150

**Fax:** (415) 575-0166